

"constitutional" minute

MINUTES
16th OF THE
FIFTEENTH ANNUAL SESSION
OF
THE KING'S M. BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,
CONVENED AT
High-Shoal Church, August 10, 1866,
AND DAYS FOLLOWING.

FRIDAY, August 10th, 1866.

According to adjournment last year, the Association met, and the sermon introductory, was preached by Elder L. H. McSwain, from 1st Corinthians, 12th chapter and 27th verse.

After a recess of thirty-five minutes, the Delegates assembled in the house. Prayer by Elder D. Pannell.

The Churches were then called, their letters read, and accounts minuted.

The Association then proceeded to ballot for Moderator and Clerk, which resulted in the choice of Elder L. H. McSwain, Moderator, and W. H. Carroll, Clerk.

Invited visiting Ministers, not Delegates, to a seat with us, and received Elder T. R. Gaines.

Appointed Elders Wm. McSwain, D. Pannell and J. Bridges, with the Moderator and Clerk, a Committee of Arrangements.

Appointed Brothers J. B. Walker, J. M. Hamrick, and P. Seapock, with the Eldership of High Shoal Church, a Committee on preaching, during the session.

On motion, adjourned until to-morrow morning, at 9 o'clock.
Prayer by Elder T. R. Gaines.

SATURDAY, August 11th, 1866.

The Association met according to adjournment. Prayer by Elder Wm. McSwain.

Called the Roll of Delegates and found all present.

The Committee to arrange the business of the Association reported and was discharged.

Read the Constitution and Rules of Decorum.

The following Committees were then announced by the Moderator :

On Union Meetings : J. Harrell, A. Earles and B. Hamrick.

On Finance : T. D. Scruggs, J. B. Walker and J. A. Wall.

On Sabbath Schools : Elder D. Pannell, Elder Wm. McSwain and J. S. Bridges.

On the State of Religion : Elder D. Pannell, N. Dobbins and J. Harrell.

Called for the Circular Letter, prepared by Elder D. Pannell, read and adopted the same, and ordered that it be printed with the Minutes of this session.

Elected the following Brethren to occupy the Stand on the Sabbath : Elder L. H. McSwain, Elder C. Livingston, Elder Wm. McSwain, and Elder J. Livingston.

Elected Wm. McSwain to preach the Introductory Sermon next year ; and Elder L. H. McSwain to write the Circular Letter, with the liberty to choose his own subject.

Appointed Elder D. Pannell, Elder Wm. McSwain, W. H. Carroll, J. Bridges, N. Dobbins, Messengers to the other portion of the King's Mountain Association, with some proposition to try and bring about a re-union of the two bodies.

The next session of this Body will be held with the Church at Mount Paran, M. H., 9 miles south-east of Shelbyville, commencing on Friday before the 2nd Sabbath in August, 1867.

On motion, adjourned until Monday morning at 9 o'clock.—
Prayer by Elder D. Pannell.

SUNDAY, August 12th, 1866.

The Stand was occupied by those elected to preach, and the word of God was exhibited faithfully, to a large and well ordered congregation, and we hope with good effect.

MONDAY, August 13th, 1866.

The Association met according to adjournment. Prayer by Elder L. H. McSwain.

Called the Roll of Delegates and found all present.

Invited Elder T. J. Campbell, visiting Minister, to a seat in Council, which was accepted.

The Committee on Union Meetings, reported as follows :

"The First Union Meeting to be held with the Church at Mt. Pleasant, commencing on Friday before the 2nd Sabbath in April, 1867—D. Pannell, Wm. McSwain and M. Pannell, to attend it. The Second Union Meeting to be held with the Church at Beaverdam, to commence on Friday before the 4th Sabbath in June, 1867—D. Pannell, Wm. McSwain, L. H. McSwain and M. Pannell, to attend."

The Committee on Finance reported and was discharged.

Called for the Report of the Committee on the state of Religion, which reported as follows :

"We see in looking over the letters from the several Churches, in our little bounds, the report that peace and harmony is universal, and report pretty small revivals ; and the zeal, harmony and brotherly love, which have been displayed during this meeting, warrant us in the belief that the time to favor Zion is at hand, and may the good Lord speed its coming."

The Committee on Sabbath Schools, reported as follows :

"We do not learn from any of our Churches, that there is a Sabbath School in progress. Yet we believe them to be a good thing and advise our Churches to organize and keep them up."

Resolved, That the Clerk superintend the printing and distribution of as many copies of these Minutes as the money in his hands will purchase, after reserving \$5 for his services.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Association is due to the brethren and citizens of this neighborhood, for their very kind entertainment of this Body, during its stay with them.

On motion, adjourned to the time and place above named.—Prayer by Elder D. Pannell.

L. H. McSWAIN, *Moderator*.

W. H. CARROLL, *Clerk*.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

The Constitutional King's Mountain Baptist Association to the Churches in Union—GREETING :

DEAR BRETHREN:—We present for your consideration, the 16th verse of the 5th chapter of our Lord's Gospel, by St. Matthew :

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

In the discussion of this text, we shall present you such views as we believe to be beneficial to you, and the world at large. In this beautiful precept, the great Teacher tells us the value and efficacy of practical Religion. He here commands his Disciples to exhibit in example their piety, for the sake of its saving effect on the beholder. Two preliminary remarks will explain the text and introduce the subject. First—no one should profess without first possessing Religion. Second—all who possess are bound to profess Religion. To profess without possessing it, is either hypocrisy or self deception. To possess without professing it, is treason against its Author, and infidelity to ourselves and the world. Now these two remarks are a complete definition of Scriptural personal saving Religion. It is justifying faith preceding and prompting profession and practice, and profession and practice following, evidencing and recommending faith, and thereby causing the world to glorify our Father which is in Heaven, by repentance, faith and love. We are first to turn to Jesus Christ, the great luminary of salvation, and catch from him the light of life, and then, in the way of profession and practice, turn to a dark world, and scatter there the light we have received from this brighter sun of our spiritual kingdom ; and, by so doing, the world will be impressed by our Religion, and be themselves led to seek it. And it is clear to our minds that a high standard of personal piety is the best proof of the truth of Christianity, and the best means of converting the world to Christ. Our Religion must transform and purify our own characters in order to convert those without. We plead not for spotless perfection. That is not found this side of Heaven ; but in the language of the learned poet :

"Defects through natures
Best production run,
The saints have spots
And spots are on the sun."

They must not, however, be spots of habitual sin. Jesus Christ died, rose and reigns, and sends the spirit not only to produce in man's state and heart, but in his life and character, a change for the better.

Neither the Bible nor the world acknowledges any man a Christian, unless in the tenor of his life, old things have passed away and all things have become new. 2d Corinthians, 5:17. The great end of all that God has done for man is to make him holy. The atonement, revealed truth and the spirit's influence, are but means for the production of this end. Conversion is the commencement of holiness, and baptism a solemn declaration of an intention to aim at holiness in all things till death. Now the Religion to meet the exigency in question, must be displayed by infusing purity into our tempers ; in restraining us from all wrong ; disposing us to beneficence ; to forgive when wronged ; inspiring us with cheerfulness and submission under affliction ; in exciting in us sympathy for the needy, and to sacrifice for the good of others, and when, throughout the ranks of our visible Zion, our Religion shall appear in making the proud, humble ; the intemperate, sober ; the covetous, liberal ; the revengeful, forgiving ; the prayerless, devout ; the repining, patient ; and the indolent, active ; its evidence will be like the sun's Meridian beams—it will both illuminate and melt. By your manner of living, impress the world that your Religion is your one all important grand business here on earth ; that it is first with you in time, first in attention, and first in everything, and you will do more in diffusing abroad the conviction that Christianity is Heaven born, than the preaching of any earthly man.

Your Religion must extend to all the relations and conditions of life. As you emerge from the entombing waters of Baptism, you light up the lamp of profession ; every time you partake of the Lord's Supper you trim the Golden flame. And now, let your attachment to Christ and

his cause be known and read of all men, in the performance of church duties, as well as by the observance of church ordinances, by assembling to hear the word and for church and prayer meeting, by giving of your substance to support the gospel, at home and abroad, for the prosperity of the church, and the conversion of sinners.

Your light must also shine in the social circle. This is the rock against which many young professors are making shipwreck of their Religious characters. The truth is, that public opinion is fast excluding Religion from the social circle, and unless bold hearted Christians make a stand against this growing evil, practical godliness will be banished from society. The temptations here to compromise with the world, and conceal the light of example, are numerous and potent! Shall we compound with the world to lay off the sacred badge of our Religion, when we enter the pale of social intercourse? If we do, we at once surrender one of our Lord's outposts to the prince of darkness. This is a treason that no true lover of Christ will commit. Then let your light shine in all your social movements.

Do you ask me how you can do so without subjecting yourself to the charge of sanctimoniousness? I reply, in many little things; by speaking evil of no one, by putting away all foolish talking, by never ascribing to others a bad motive, so long as you can impute to them good ones, by discouraging the tattler, tale-bearer and slanderer, by seeking to heal breaches between neighbors, by discountenancing all unnecessary dissipating amusements, by being simple, serene and tender-hearted, by giving to conversation a religious turn, and by speaking out on all suitable occasions of Christ, his Kingdom, his Religion; of sin, its enmity; of hell and Heaven; in this and like manner you will shine as lights in the world, exhibit amid those without the winning sweetness of a holy example, and thereby not only impress men that your Religion is an emanation from Heaven, but it is both practicable and desirable. Your light must shine in the business circle. The great error of many is that they regard Religion as something separate from the common duties of life. It is difficult to say whether more harm has been done to the cause of Christ by separating what he has joined together, or joining together what he has separated. He has enjoined this injunction—Be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. Romans, 12th chapter and 11th verse.

Now, what numbers have wounded Christ in the house of his friends, by keeping apart these two, and acting on the anti-Scriptural maxim, business in its place, and Religion in its place. Especially has this been the case in pecuniary and commercial transactions. Some make promises to meet their dues, only to break them. Some take advantage of the necessities of their neighbors, to increase their gains; others show an under-reaching and over-reaching, showing a disposition to cheat and defraud. That Christ intended His Religion to regulate all of our secular transactions, needs no proof to a reader of the New Testament. The command, "owe no man anything," issues from the same authority, and is enforced by the same sanction as the command, repent and be baptized. Let your Religion appear, by not only keeping within the precincts of legal obligation, but by avoiding every petty unfairness, and exemplifying everything that is honest and honorable, and when those with whom you have to do are convinced that in all your worldly affairs, you are regulated by the high and pure motives of Christianity, you will have done more in impressing them with the value of our Religion, than you could do by your prayers and tears, could you live a thousand years.

In the next place, your light must shine in the civil and political circle. Civil government is as much an ordinance of God as baptism. The powers that be, are ordained of God. Romans, 13th chapter and 1st verse. Christians are deeply interested in civil affairs, from the fact that civil, necessarily includes Religious liberty. They, too, have bodies, families, characters and property to protect. Hence, against an enlightened, calm concernment in political matters, on the part of Christians, we say not a word. Nor do we touch on any man's political creed; we have ours, we allow you yours. What we oppose and what has done a vast deal towards bringing Christianity into disrepute, is the many cases in which professed Christians have become clamorous party politicians. Such are far from being the best patriots. Upon the whole, they injure their country as much as they do their church. Brethren do hear us while we speak out our convictions on this subject. Just let professing Christians become so engrossed in politics as to forsake their Church to attend political meetings, spend the Sabbath in reading secular papers instead of their Bibles, discuss politics on the way to, at, and from the house of God, and do as Whigs or Democrats, what they would not do as individuals, and they will inflict more injury on the cause of Christ than all the infidels in Christendom; and we moreover announce it as our firm belief, that no Christian can aid and abet all of the measures of either of the great political parties of the day, without grieving God's spirit and lessening his Religious influence.

What then? Stand aloof from every measure that requires of you either in fact or in appearance, the sacrifice of Christian propriety in all your movements? Aet from a sense of Religious obligation. Realize your accountability at the Judgment Seat for the proper performance of all your civil duties, and you will not only most effectually serve your country, but serve your Saviour in serving your country, and thereby exhibit to the God-forgetting world a most striking proof of the divinity, loveliness and transforming power of the Religion of Jesus. This, unless we have misunderstood the whole matter, is the Religion of the New Testament, and the Religion of which our world stands in crying need. In the right and for the honor of Christ, seek to exemplify it. In your conversion and baptism you put on the snow white robe of Christianity; lay it not off when you leave the house of God. All seamless and glistening with unearthly beauty, let it invest you in the family circle. Clad in it as your glory and hope, mingle in society, keep it on, and keep it unspotted from the world in all your business and civil duties. In all aspects of your character, in the conditions, relations and employments of life, act out your Religion, your baptismal vow, for the salvation of deathless souls demand it.

Having then described the kind of piety necessary to evince the truth of Christianity and convert mankind to Christ, let us, in the next place, show how it effects a result so desirable. It convinces the judgment of the irreligious, which, after all, is the best argument in favor of Christ's Religion. Is it a fact that some five or six hundred prophecies have been fulfilled, as the stream of time has rolled on? Is it the wonders of Calvary and the Resurrection, or that it spread at first, within a few years, from the Jordan to the Thames, and is heard in more than two hundred of the languages of earth. No. These, though mighty in their place, are not our weightiest proofs; our crowning evidence, most unanswerable argument, is personal Religion. A conversion from depravity and actual sin to practical Religion, is a sublimer miracle than the resurrection of Lazarus. A life of growing likeness to God is both a prophecy and design of all prophecy. The best Commentary on the Bible the world has ever seen is a holy life. This is the living epistle that all can read, all understand, and that convinces all. Of all modes of teaching Christianity, exemplifying it is the best. To all cavillers and semi-infidels, we say, come and see our most striking proofs and refute them if you can. Behold how humble the disciples of Christ are in prosperity, how forgiving under wrongs, how fair in their dealings, how patient under suffering, how submissive under losses, how useful in life, how triumphant in death. Here is the Religion of Christ, not shining on the pages of the Bible, not in creeds, books or sermons, but living and moving before you, and shining in the conduct of your neighbor, with the truth embodied before you, can you doubt. Have you any logic rigid enough to resist the reasonings, the appeals, the glowing eloquence of an immaculate, Christ-like piety? If this does not shame you out of your infidelity, and shame it back to the bottomless pit, then you love darkness better than light, for this argument shuts you up to the alternative either of closing your eyes or seeing the light, and being illuminated by it; but if you would see practical Religion in a stronger light as an argument, see how comparatively inefficient all the other arguments and appliances of Christianity are, without it. We may build neat meeting houses, fill our pulpits with a learned, devoted, eloquent ministry. Every family may not only have the Scriptures of God, but the best uninspired books, tracts and periodicals may be scattered broad cast, and yet, vastly important as these instrumentalities are, the general unbelief of men will never be overcome till there is in Christians a corresponding holiness. In vain may we put in the hands of Infidels our best books on evidences of Christianity, who are acquainted with professing Christians who patronize sinful arrangements in trade, at the ballot-box, breaking the Sabbath, and sometimes drink halfway to drunkenness. The inconsistency of professions will, with these Infidels, neutralize all the arguments in favor of Christianity. They even read or heard we urge in vain the claims of Christ on the wordling, who has discovered in professing Christians, a disposition to take advantage in business transactions. Wo to the world, if all who name the name of Christ were Christians after their grade; but let all our skeptics live amid neighbors who act out their Religion in all things, let the rising generation have parents who reflect the image of Christ in their daily deportment; let husbands have wives who, by a meek and prayerful spirit, adorn their profession; let pastors have churches zealous of good works.

In fine, let all the visible Zion of God tear the veil from their eyes, read the world from their hearts, and rise up to the New Testament standard of life and action, and there will he diffused abroad, a deep and practical conviction that the Gospel is divinely true, and is the one thing needful. It does more, it removes objections. We appeal to the Scriptures, to induce men to become Christians. They appeal to the inconsistent lives of professors to justify their irrel-

gion. From this quarter they draw most of their objections against the reception of Christianity. Every Minister knows that from this source, arises one great obstacle in the way of converting men to Christ. It matters not, though we can point to multitudes who adorn their professions, on one inconsistent professor, like the falling star, they fix their gaze. He fills the entire field of their vision. His imperfections, they magnify into crimes. The shortcomings of the few, they impute to all, and then judge our Religion by us, instead of us by our Religion. In this way they excuse themselves from the service of our Lord.

Now it is not my object, on this occasion, to show the unfairness and absurdity of this mode of reasoning. We stay not to show that, though one-third of the church were a disgrace to the Christian name, that that would be no safeguard to them against the wrath to come, nor lessen their obligation, immediately, to repent and believe the Gospel. My business is to find out how this sheet-anchor excuse is to be taken from the ungodly. How we can render them excuseless and thereby gain a second mighty vantage ground in bringing them to Christ. Not by professing Religion. Not by talking religion. Not by weeping Religion. Not by shouting Religion. But by acting Religion. Let the lives of Christians and the first principles of the Gospel develop themselves, in making us harmless and blameless, the sons of God, in holy love, and self-denying exertions to get good and do good. Let the lives of Christians, in some adequate sense, represent Christ and his Religion, and many around us will have no cloak for their sins. They will be led to take all the shame and blame of their impenitence to themselves, and thus take a second step towards Christ and Heaven. The piety under consideration, not only convinces the judgment and removes objections, but wins esteem. In elevated personal Religion, there is something so intrinsically lovely and winning, that the most wicked respect and venerate it. Though in our aspect of the case, the feelings of the unregenerate are averse to holiness, yet it is a fact, that the more consistently Religious we are, the more we are admired and confided in by the wicked world. Why had mankind rather form connections, make bargains, and deal with those that serve God, than with those that serve him not? Why, in the times of calamity, affliction and death, do the impenitent so much desire the presence and prayers of the godly followers of Christ? Would you inspire the unconverted with a high appreciation of your Religion, gain a lasting halo in their esteem, and thereby make them the friends of your Lord?—Then rise from the dust, as it is written, "Awake, awake, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments; O, Jerusalem, arise and shake thyself from the dust. Isaiah, 52d chapter and 1st verse. Christians of this sort, being so manifestly the subjects of grace themselves, become the medium of it to others. They convert because they evidence their conversion. They allure to a brighter world, because they lead the way. Hosea, 2d chapter and 14th verse. The ungodly see in this an end of all controversy. A holy life preaches with an eloquence that none but the deeply depraved can resist. This then is the piety that most powerfully evidences the truth of Christianity, and converts mankind to God. How infinitely important for all who claim to be Christians, to exemplify the kind of Religion we have recommended. Then Christians will be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Then God's kingdom will stand above every other kingdom, and Zion no longer rendered powerless, nor marred by self-inflicted wounds, will become the joy of Heaven, and the wonder and hope of the world. Then the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Micah, 4th chapter and 1st verse. The world, conversion—at home and abroad—will move forward with primitive speed. Millennial dawn will blush deeper and deeper. The sun of truth will rise on our darkened world, and revivals will roll from land to land, like waves of the mighty deep, and the way to Heaven will be crowded with travellers as resplendent as the stars that bestud the midnight Heavens. Come, that day. Let me, in some humble measure, contribute to bring about this second great reformation, when all the disciples of Christ shall adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things, and this worthless body of mine shall be given to the worms.

With a caution to the unconverted, we will close. We fear some of our impenitent friends watch us to condemn and not to commend. Others, we fear, would rather bring us down to their standard, than to rise up to ours. Others of you, demand of us more than our Lord. He will allow us to be his disciples, though we have infirmities; you will not. We beseech you not to make our imperfections the occasion of your destruction, if we are all deceived. What, then? Why, you and I are condemned to eternal death by the same law, and will it lessen your guilt any to have us in the same condemnation? Will our hypocrisy be any protection to you against the coming storm of wrath? Will it diminish the anguish and terror of your death-bed, because all the members of your neighboring church are hollow-hearted? Will it be any safeguard to you in the great heart-searching day of Judgment, to have with you on the left hand, all the professors of Religion that you knew on earth? Will it be any consolation to you in Hell; mitigate the sufferings of endless damnation, to have as your companions in woe, your professing neighbor, father, mother and sister? Say, will it? But what, if on account of our belief in the justifying merits of Christ, notwithstanding all our imperfections, we pass the ordeal of the last Judgment, are accepted, and rise and sing and shine around the throne, while you, on account of rejecting Christ, are turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God! God have mercy on us all, and wash us in the atoning blood of His son. Amen.

STATISTICAL TABLE.

CHURCHES.	POST OFFICES.	SUPPLIES.	CHURCH CLERKS.	DELEGATES' NAMES.	Contributions,	Total,	Dead,	Excluded,	Restored,	Transferred,	Received,	Baptized,
Bolling Spring, Behe, Beaverdam, High Shoals, Mount Pleasant, Mount Pleasant, Mount Pleasant, Mount Pleasant, Sandy Plains, Mount Harmony, Walls,	Moonsborough, N. C., Shelbyville, N. C., Moonsborough, N. C., Shelbyville, N. C., Shelbyville, N. C., Broad River, N. C., New House, S. C., Camp Hill, N. C., Oakspring, N. C., Oakspring, N. C.,	D. Scroggs, L. H. McSwain, D. Scroggs, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain, L. H. McSwain,	2. E. D. Hawkins, 4. W. A. Jones, 4. J. A. Wall, 3. T. D. Scroggs, 3. J. Randall, 2. W. H. Carroll, 2. J. B. Walker, 1. A. W. Biggs, 4. A. Harrell,	No Representation. Elder D. Pannell, E. D. Hawkins, Elder W. McSwain, J. Bridges, B. Hamrick, J. A. Wall, J. M. Good, N. Dobbins, T. D. Scroggs, J. M. Hamrick, Elder J. H. McSwain, J. Harrell, P. Scroggs, A. Earle, W. H. Carroll, J. B. Walker, A. W. Biggs, C. Yelton, A. W. Biggs, J. Robbins, J. S. Bridges.	00 58 1 05 134 1 60 106 1 65 53 1 55 53 1 55 83 1 00 102 1 65 102 1 70 67 1 50 69	0 58 134 106 53 53 83 102 102 67 69	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0